

Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet

90 Brainard Road • Hartford, CT 06114 • (860) 525-5080 • (860) 525-5088 (fax) • landrews@cfnonprofits.org

Appropriations, Human Services and Public Health Committees

Public Hearing

September 22, 2010

Re: FFY11 Federal Block Grants

The Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet is a statewide coalition comprised of 20 nonprofit human service associations and organizations representing approximately 800 providers. Its mission is to advance a strong and unified nonprofit human services system to effectively meet community needs. The Cabinet has worked with state agencies on critical contracting issues and business practices that impact over 2,000 Purchase of Services (POS) Contracts valued at approximately \$1.4 billion annually. Members play a vital role in addressing the critical health and human services needs that face so many Connecticut residents – they provide the safety net that *anyone* can find themselves in need of when least expected.

As you know, there is flat funding to the bulk of the federal block grants with the exception of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) allocation plan, which has a recommended 5% reduction. The 5% reduction to SSBG has been recommended because the President has noted that he would like to reduce domestic spending by 5%, although the current federal budget proposal funds SSBG at the same level as FFY10. As I am sure you are aware, flat funding actually results in cuts to providers when inflation and other programmatic cost increases are considered.

We are all aware of the difficult economic times facing not only Connecticut, but the entire nation. Providers and those we serve have already struggled through two state fiscal years full of rescissions, reduced allotments and budget cuts. Meanwhile, as we stare down one of the largest state budget deficits in history, service demand continues to grow while the capacity to meet the demand does not. Cuts to the essential services funded by these block grants will only result in increased costs to the state in the long run as many of these services focus on prevention.

Regarding the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), while the federal budget is not yet passed, Connecticut's proposed portion will be flat-funded at approximately \$19.5 million, although the Department of Social Services (DSS) recommends that the state adopt a plan reflecting a potential 5% reduction. We appreciate the Department's efforts to look forward so as not to later blindside providers with retrospective reductions as has happened in the past. If reductions do need to be made, providers need to be notified of any such reductions as early as possible.

However, last year in FFY10, due to there being no carry-forward dollars, providers received an across-the-board 4.1% cut. Again, neither of the FFY10 or FFY11 cuts reflect the actual cut felt by providers due to an increase in inflation and actual service delivery costs. Thousands of Connecticut residents rely on services funded through SSBG such as: housing, counseling, legal assistance, family planning, case management, substance abuse prevention and treatment, transportation, and protective and special services for individuals with disabilities. These are all services that many of us take for granted – either thinking we will never need them or we will be able to easily access them – but that is not the case for many people. Continued reductions in these services are going to leave many across our state without access to very basic, preventative health and human services.

Our state and federal government will surely continue to struggle in the current economic climate and we are guaranteed more difficult years ahead that will likely jeopardize funding for the vital services supported through the block grants. As the Cabinet has testified in previous years, we are depending on the state to provide guidance and leadership in making some crucial long-term

Children's League of Connecticut

Connecticut AIDS Resource
Coalition

Connecticut Association for
Community Action

Connecticut Association for
Human Services

Connecticut Association of Area
Agencies on Aging

Connecticut Association of
Nonprofits

Connecticut Coalition Against
Domestic Violence

Connecticut Coalition to End
Homelessness

Connecticut Community Providers
Association

Connecticut Consortium of Legal
Services

Connecticut Council of Family
Service Agencies

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis
Services

Connecticut Women's Consortium

End Hunger Connecticut

Mental Health Association of
Connecticut

Oak Hill

Planned Parenthood of Southern
New England

The Connection, Inc.

Wheeler Clinic

decisions about block grant funded services. The Legislative and Executive Branches need to consider, long-term, what our priorities are when it comes to block grant funded services and what funding the state is willing to make up for when federal cuts are made. This includes developing mechanisms to make intelligent cuts, only when absolutely necessary, that are based on fair and equitable performance evaluation measures, meaningful contract compliance measures and true cost-benefit analysis.

As essential health and human services programs continue to be vulnerable to rescissions and budget cuts, I urge your careful consideration of block grant funding allocation. It is unreasonable to ask anyone to choose randomly between valuable programs and significant, life-altering needs such as: child care vs. transportation, substance abuse treatment vs. in-home health services, energy assistance vs. food assistance, emergency shelters vs. transitional living. Every need is crucial, every service is important and every life is equally valuable.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

For questions, please contact Liza Andrews, Project Director, at (860) 525-5080 or landrews@ctnonprofits.org.